

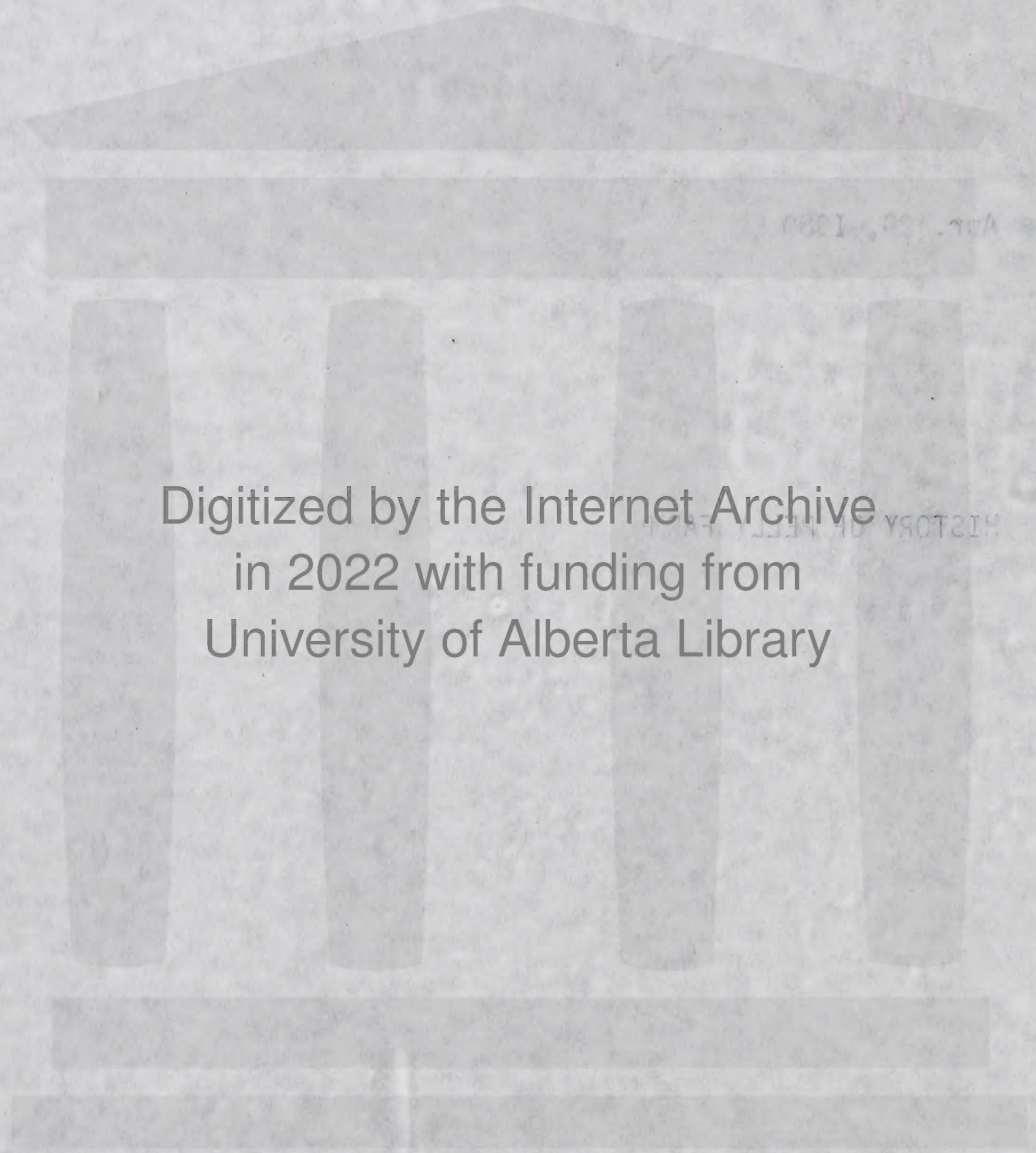
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HISTORY OF PELLY FARM

Pam:92 Bradley, Mrs. D. BRA

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## History of Pelly Farm

To clarify between the names - Pelly Farm and Pelly River Ranch: apparently from 1901 until 1954 it was known as the Pelly Farm, and in fact many people still refer to it as such - especially the locals and old-timers. But, to quote from Hugh Bradley:

" When we first came in 1954 we called it Pelly River Ranch because we didn't know any better. By the time we realized our mistake it was too late to change back."

I think anyone who has met Dick and Hugh Bradley would agree that they are two very exceptional and unique individuals, very quiet, hard-working and steady. If I were to find any fault, it would be with their modesty and over generosity of their time and energy - but I would never, never attempt to change them. They are both, to my mind, very typical, common-sense, practical earth people.

Now, to put my best foot forward and take one step into the past . . . . 1901.

One Edouard Menard (Edward Menard), a logger, made the first purchase transaction for a parcel of 20 acres for farming purposes on July 22nd 1901. For some 18 months, this man was involved through correspondence and personal confrontations with land agents both in Fort Selkirk and Dawson City. The initial price was \$5.00 an acre. It seems that during the transaction the government became aware of the fact that this parcel of land was near the new government road, which is known today as the old Dawson Trail and runs behind our cow pasture. It seems as if the government thought Edward Menard should pay \$10.00 an acre.

After reading all the correspondence and hassel Mr. Menard went to, I have nothing but respect for his perserverence and endurance - and to think: they didn't even have a land freeze at that time!





Finally, the government did concede and the original offer was accepted. For a total of \$100, the Pelly Farm got it's beginning.

Edward Menard had a partner by the name of Grennier who apparently was both a farmer and family man. These two men, I believe, owned the farm from 1901 until 1915 although I have found some records which indicate that Menard was employed as a telegraph operator in Fort Selkirk some time between 1910 and 1914. Further research is necessary before this can be verified. In August of 1978, we had the pleasure of meeting the daughter and grandchildren of Percy Wright, who is the stepson of the Grennier. For over a year, I have been corresponding with Mr. & Mrs. Percy Wright. I plan to visit them in Scarborough Maine some time in late November to interview and tape the history of this era first-hand. I am really looking forward to meeting Percy. I certainly could not ask for more co-operation and support than these people are giving me. It is very encouraging. If it were not for them, the beginnings of the farm would be little more than supposition, gleaned from official government records. How much reality, heart-ache, success and failure, to say nothing of scenes of everyday life, can one find in a piece of paper? I can honestly say that, without Percy's co-operation, these pages would be indeed lost to history.

On the lower end of our flat there is an old cabin still standing which we believe to be the original, built in 1901. We have done some maintenance over the years but it is due for yet another new pole and sod roof again. A local trapper has been using this cabin as his base camp for the past two winters. It sits in a alcove of big cottonwood and spruce; the sod roof is covered with a marvellous array of flowers and a few small willow saplings. Whenever the sun is out, the cabin is built in such a fashion that one part of the roof is always in shadow and the other part is always in sun. There is also evidence of wallpaper both in the cabin and in the outhouse. I wonder just how many pictures have been taken of this building? Probably at least a hundred a year. It's a building which radiates of peace and old times. People speak of it as giving off good vibrations.

In 1915, Frank Chapman and Pete Olsen bought the farm. They are spoken of locally as the "old men", so I presume they weren't young





when they came here. Chapman and Olsen did most of the clearing and breaking of the land and setting it up as a farm. They wintered horses and raised some cattle. Also, they brought in a hand-fed thrashing machine, a steam engine, and various horse-drawn equipment; also a roller mill. It's very obvious that they grew hay to feed the livestock. They were successful with grain too, and ground their wheat into flour which sold for human beings as well as for dog feed.

When the farm first started, it was mainly used as a rest and rehabilitation center for stagecoach horses and geological survey horses. In fact, all us owners have boarded horses - even after the government went out of the horse business. We've boarded horses for the outfitting boys for at least 20 years. Today, helicopters are the phantom horses of the past, and they serve forestry and mining outfits from our chopper pad.

Dick and Hugh have worked our farm with horses on the horse-drawn equipment brought in by the previous owners for a good number of years. Things they used were: a binder, hay mower, hay rake and a breaking plow. In 1960, the Bradleys brought up a 1942 Ford tractor, which we still use - which means it's older than I am! Two weeks ago this poor old tractor had two sick tires but after some difficulty, we found an outside source and had tubes flown in. The 624 diesel International Harvester tractor came up from Fort St. John in 1971. We got our GMC 3-ton truck "Blue Boy" in 1966, also our forage harvester which is second-hand - of unknown age. 1966 was a very good year. We thrash with a machine which was brought in by Wilkenson and whose vintage is somewhere around 1928. Most of its repairs have been mere improvisations over the years. Of course, this is the norm around our place; we have a perpetual sick-list for all our equipment and treatment is lavished out according to the priority of the season. One doesn't snow plough in July when the potato digger needs a new chain! Common-sense is often a deciding factor, as well as the fact that the machine was probably needed "last week".

With further research, I should be able to cover the 1915 - 1927 era. Many old-timers, such as the Camerons and Taylors, have offered their time in this undertaking, for which I thank them.





It is known that Pete Olsen is buried in the Military Cemetery at Fort Selkirk. Story has it that Olsen's heirs sent in an outside lawyer to settle his estate and, in doing so, Chapman was financially broken and he was forced to return to the states. George and May Fairclough bought the Pelly Farm in 1927. Unfortunately George passed away recently. George freighted on the river and was in the wood business; he also wintered government horses. He sawed lumber off our land and built the house and cabin we are now in, as well as some other buildings we still use. The house is big: 5 bedrooms, a living room, dining room, kitchen, bathroom and utility room, as well as a second utility room we built in 1973. It is very sturdily built, of 6X6 squared timbers, and is well-loved as our home. A typical farmhouse and damnably hard to keep clean - at least by my standards!

In 1940, the Faircloughs sold out to J.C. Wilkenson and family. It is very interesting to note that each of the owners before us thought he had 3 homesteads of 160 acres each, plus a 400-acre land grant that Chapman and Olsen got for some work they had done for the government. When we bought in 1954, we wanted to see a clear title; we found that only one homestead was proved up and there was no record of the 400 acre grant. The story was that all the transactions had been written on Transfer of Mining Claim forms and these had either been destroyed in Dawson or lost when the capital was shifted to Whitehorse in 1953. J.C. Wilkenson had to get a special "Order in Council" from Ottawa to buy the land that was actually being used as a farm in 1954 - some 337 acres. This encompasses only our fields. Land that has been used for grazing horses and cattle for the past 78 years is still not part of the farm.

Wilkenson brought some machinery, primarily haying equipment and he harvested quite a bit of grain. At one time he had pigs as well as cows. In addition, the whole family were trappers - and very good trappers. Many of you know the names of Jared, Eddie and Ethel Wilkenson. A fascinating story which Dick tells is about a very chic 3/4 length coat he saw belonging to Mrs. Wilkenson; apparently it took some 11 years of trapping by all of them to get enough matched lynx to make this coat. Dick says it was gorgeous; he has never seen the





likes of it before or since. It is well-known how capable the Wilkensons were in the great outdoors and much of their livelihood came from trapping. Not very romantic or glamorous - just damn cold, hard work.

How or why did the Bradleys ever get involved with the Pelly River Ranch? Actually it's very interesting. Some Fate, some Destiny. Hugh was a student at the University of Alberta, working on his Bachelor of Science degree in field crops. Dick had completed his courses at the Olds Agricultural College - no dummies these guys! During the summer of 52 and 53, Hugh was employed at the experimental farm near Haines Junction ( mile 1019 Alaska Highway). In the course of his employment, he came to the Pelly Farm to check out the experimental plots and got to know the J.C. Wilkenson family. Apparently, after a time Mr. Wilkenson decided to sell out and he approached Hugh, who in turn approached two friends and of course his brother Dick. Dick arrived first, on April 17, 1954, since Hugh was finishing up his degree and he arrived the day after his birthday on June 4th, 1954. One of the partners soon went on to what he felt was bigger and better things, while the other partner is still a silent member over 25 years later. It would be interesting to know what the family in Lacombe, Alberta, really thought when the boys decided to sow their wild oats in the Yukon. The men have mentioned that, until their mother visited them, she felt they had gone to the end of the world. The entire family and every relative was very supportive. I imagine each auntie rivalled the other in who could give the most things ~~to~~ the boys would need. I have recipes from Aunt Maude; pots and dishes from Aunt Hazel; bedding and quilts from Aunt Laura; and many other things, too many to mention, from various other aunts --- right down to a vase of their mother's which I treasure dearly. And the uncles were just as bad - or good, depending on how you look at it - what with livestock, machinery, milk seperators and butter churns. I have never had the fortune of meeting their mother but often writing to Dick for 12 1/2 years I got to know every relative in a fashion. Most of them I have finally met. Until I met their dad, I couldn't understand how their emotional level was so constant - in fact, one straight line. As a person who responds to all stimuli - good, bad, or indifferent- it took lots of adjusting





on my part to cope with two individuals who never show undue happiness, anger, frustration or discouragement. In a way, this has been a good thing for me as a rudder for my impulsiveness. Since Dick now talks (I've heard from many sources that Dick was indeed the silent type), perhaps I haven't been too bad an influence on them either.

When the Bradleys set up the farm, they had \$2.53 between them and no known income. They started out with one saw and a boar and raised pigs and sold milk to pay for their groceries for about five years until they got their herd of cows built up. As we say: we have never got rich, but we have sure have a good life being poor.

Hugh has been keeping daily weather records for 25 years. Usually on washdays I ask him what is in store weather wise; his only answer is that "Yup, we're bound to have some". I challenge anyone to ask Hugh questions on precipitation, frost free days, degrees of warmth or coldness, how many inches of snow fall in any given year, or how thick the ice is on any winter day in our area. Hugh's weather station is to him what my rabbits are to me. Dick's interests are quite varied as well. He has undertaken to teach Glen how to hunt and trap, how to flesh pelts and look after the furs, as well as hand-loading their bullets.

What do we do down on the farm? Contrary to the beliefs of some tourists, firstly we live there all year. I guess some of them find that hard to believe. Lots of times, just to get a response from people when they ask that question, "Do you live here all year?" I say, "Hell, no! The rabbits hibernate, and the cows come to Hawaii with us!!". Actually, I really get off on some of the questions tourists ask me - questions which are really, really super-amazing, they are unrealistic, they are just about any adjective you care to use. But primarily I find them amusing. I think the one incident that will always stand out in my mind was when I met an elderly lady from California, with that sort-of blue tinted hair, chicly dressed; she walked into my house and stood looking around, raising her eyebrows and, turning up her nose, said, "Hmmm, at least I expected to see a dirt floor". To me, that's the cream of the crop; that question sort of is tops over all the rest I've been asked, although it was more of a comment than a question!





To get back, seriously, to the question "What do we do down on the farm?" - primarily we are occupied in the endeavour to raise cattle. We have raised only the Hereford breed; we like to winter few more than 50 because of the feed situation, but in the spring of course we have 20 - odd calves. In the fall we generally butcher anywhere from 15 on up of young stock; usually they have been in, say, the spring of 1979 and will be butchered in the fall of 1980. This meat we do sell locally, primarily in Pelly Crossing, Stewart Crossing, Mayo and Whitehorse and many of our customers have been with us many, many years -- a few even as long as 25 years. Other produce which we sell are of course, eggs and potatoes; many of the locals come in and are quite willing to take the potatoes without having had them sorted first, according to size. They are willing to haul the potatoes themselves which, in turn, saves us delivery costs. We do winter horses for an outfitter and have done so over the past several years. We raise about 200 chickens and every second spring we go to Whitehorse and meet a plane which has our day-old chicks on board, these chicks have not had anything to eat or drink, so it's just a sort-of fly in, pick up the chicks and fly home trip. Of course, with our old truck, it isn't actually a "flying" trip- one way is generally a ten-hour haul. When we get home, which is in the wee hours of the morning, the men must set up the brooder house and teach all 200 chicks how to eat and drink. The big high that I get off this that the mortality rate for chickens is supposedly 3% and, because of that they give you 3 extra chicks per hundred to cover your losses. But in all the time I've been there, we have managed to bring each and every chick in alive. It's really a good feeling. That's one of the highs of living on the farm - you work your ass off but the rewards are rewards no-one else can give you. You earn them yourself; they are yours; nobody's going to take them away from you.

As many of you may know by now, I'm into raising rabbits. That's my hobby for my "spare" time. This summer I raised (you know, it's kind of hard to keep count on rabbits!)- but I guess I could safely say that I raised probably 150. I winter 5 does and 2 bucks. The rabbits are raised primarily for their meat much as I hate to admit that I have tanned prime hides with allum and have sold them locally for trim.





I've also sold the hides green because a lot of the ladies now are getting interested in the tanning process with the allum recipe which is really, really simple - the hard part being the skinning of the rabbit pelt. This applies to the pelt of any fur-bearing animals for that matter. Some of the rabbits I give away, too, and some of them I sell. I've got rabbits in Prince George, there are some in Dawson and in Mayo - I've got rabbits all over. Yes, I'm really off on my rabbits - don't know how I'm going to manage raising quite so many while writing a book, but I'm not going to give it up. That's my one thing.

Every night after supper the men seem to get all the attention when there's company because they go out to milk the cows. Now that's a pretty big thing. People don't often see other people hand-milking cows too very often these days, so I was feeling a little left out and every night I'd go around and water my rabbits with a jaxer jug and I thought, "Hmmm, gotta think of something that's just going to get a little limelight my way. Okay, the men earn their share of the limelight, but just once in a while, after supper and I've done all the cruddy dishes, I'd like to have some one come with me". So I decided that I'd take a milk pail to water my rabbits. And I remember one night in June last year, just having finished seeing to my rabbits, a vehicle from Alberta pulled in and I walked over to the truck and asked if I could help them. They said, "and what have you been doing?" and I said, "Well, I've just finished milking the rabbits". The lady in the truck said, "Oh, and do they produce well?" Of course, that busted me all up! So this is another thing that my rabbits do for me - they bring people out verbally; they bring them out with their cameras; I've had the odd one that asks if I kill them and I don't like the question - the answer is 'no', I don't.

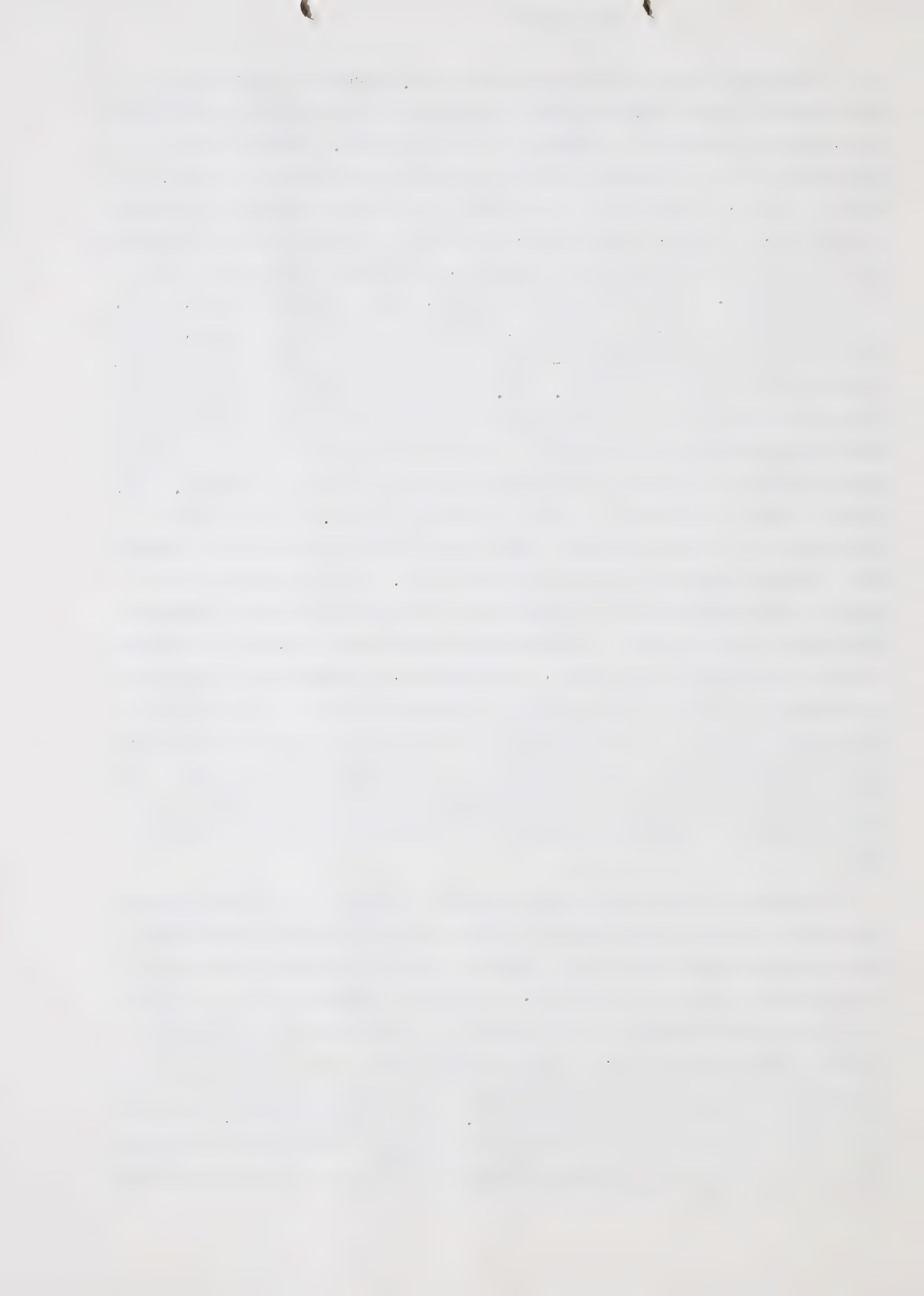
Now let's take a swing into the more recent past. I will tell you how I came to be on the Pelly River Ranch and what pressured me to leave Southern Ontario. Like most people who visit or correspond with the Bradleys, I too heard of the existence of Canada's most northerly viable farm "second-hand", so to speak.





In 1961, I was a student nurse at St. Joseph's Hospital in Peterborough, Ontario, and spent considerable free time writing letters, doing errands and reading to old patients. Often I have wondered if the following event was touched by Fate or Destiny. In March of 1961, I collected an armful of old farm papers by request, because Mr. Carroll, an 87-year-old retired farmer who was afflicted with arthritis and very poor eyesight, retained a great interest in agriculture. In the 'Family Herald', dated December 15th, 1960, I came across a two-page article, complete with six pictures, titled "SOURDOUGHS IN BLUE DENIMS" - written by Lynn Harrington with photographs by her husband Richard. Mr. Carroll had me read this article numerous times; he was totally fascinated by the idea of two Alberta-born boys attempting to farm in a part of Canada believed to consist entirely of ice and snow and populated exclusively by Eskimos. Mr. Carroll was, to my mind, a very practical person. For days he contemplated all the problems that might confront these two "young'uns" trying to make out on God's good land. As time passed, he became very wrapped up in thoughts of the "good old days" and suddenly he seemed to have a more ardent desire to live, which included a lot of plans for the future. Apparently, it was always his dream to answer the "call of the wild"; his great concern that Dick and Hugh make the best of their abilities was beyond my comprehension. His enthusiasm about the north and the challenges it must offer was definitely contagious and I found myself wondering just what possessed them to attempt such an undertaking against such numerous odds.

The urgent need to know how anyone could make a living raising cattle and growing grains where there is very little rainfall and winter temperatures could be minus 70 degrees Fahrenheit was almost too much for this old gentleman. He finally persuaded me to write to the Bradley brothers on his behalf; it was so sad to watch his painful hands grip a pen. What a decision for me - which brother do I write to? The article did not have an address but it did describe the farm's location quite well. My choice was Dick, probably based on the sole fact that he was the oldest. This must have been where Destiny entered, because I know now that his brother would not





have answered. Dick wrote at least five letters to Mr. Carroll. To this day, one belief Mr. Carroll had has remained with me - it was said with such utter sincerity and conviction; when he died, he firmly believed he would spend eternity owning a farm, and as a hobby he would keep an eye on the Pelly River Ranch. I know there are many people who would scoff at this whole idea, but I knew Mr. Carroll and he Believed with a capital B. Even now, I can recall all the pain and grief I experienced when I had to write to Dick with the news of our mutual friend's death. For a couple of months, we gave each other consolation through letters but eventually many other things of interest worked their way into our correspondence. Personally, I knew I was hooked on all the incredible tales Dick would tell me about - even the weather reports were just about more than I could imagine. Over the months, it finally dawned on me that our letters had become very intimate. Since I was interested in nursing at some remote outpost, Dick did not hesitate to invite me to consider the possibilities in the Yukon as a choice. For two months I toyed with the idea of going north, and then, in February of 1962, I sent an application to the Whitehorse Hospital in the Yukon, which was readily accepted. This exciting move was planned for August.

Immediately, I wrote to Dick and informed him of my decision. Every day, I went to my mail box in a nervous state of excitement. Daily, for six months, I went through this state of hope and anticipation, only to be sorely disappointed and totally confused and frustrated. By August, my resignation was handed in and all my plans had been verbalized long before, so I felt I must move on - if only to save face. My disappointment in not hearing from Dick was very deep and tinged with regret. Pulling myself together, and after deciding that there must be other fish in the sea, I left for Edmonton and the day after my arrival was employed at the Edmonton General. At the train station I was tapped on the shoulder. "Are you the nurse who's been writing to a Yukoner called Dick?" Buck Godwin was in partnership with Dick and High. I recall wondering if and what characteristics and physical attributes these men had in common. Buck and his wife Nola insisted that I





come for supper to their home, for which I was more than grateful. The highlight of the evening was a presentation of slides taken of the farm!

After Buck took me home, I spent the following days pondering on all the possible reasons why Dick hadn't written since February. What had I said out of place? What had I not said that I should have said? Somehow I just wasn't satisfied that our letters had suddenly terminated. Deciding that I had nothing to lose, I wrote again to the Yukon. This time I kept it all secret and tried to act indifferently when I saw the mail man coming down my street. Sheepishly, I often found myself out on the sidewalk engaging the postman in discussions about the weather as I nervously watched him seemingly fumble in his big bag. With a huge grin and a wink, he asked me if part of my mail was hauled by dog team. Giving him a big hug, I fairly snatched the letters out of his hand. Seeking solitude, I read the mail in the privacy of the bathroom. Yes, like most people, I was afraid of disappointment or, worse still, rejection. Dick's reason for not answering left me totally and utterly dumbfounded: during the spring, the winter run-off was so great that his road was washed out and it was many months before he got any mail. Then he got all mine at once. He was dismayed to realize that I had scrubbed my Yukon plans.....

The next chapter in my life from 1962 to 1973 is virtually a private one, so I'll only give you a thumb-sketch to bring you to a realization of how it is that I came to the farm when I did.

During the time that I was waiting for Dick to answer my letters, I happened to meet a very romantic handsome man who was 6'6". This man I eventually married in 1963. I am sure now that if I had to choose between Dick and Frank, as I was sure then, that it would have been a very tough decision but it's very easy to see how the physical presence of one outweigh the non-presence of another - the person that I was only writing to. Frank and I were married in 1963 and I had a son in March of 1965. On May 1st, Glen's father was killed in a car accident. Very shortly before that time, I realized that I was afflicted with an illness that couldn't be coped with in the Yukon so, over the next many, many years, I under-





went major back operations, a total of six. During this time of doctoring, it was not recommended that I come to the Yukon because the facilities that were needed to give me treatment were just not available. And so, having a son to raise, I had to do what was realistic, not what was romantic; besides being romantic, I couldn't make a move that would seem to be impractical.

So for this reason, it wasn't until I last saw a specialist in 1973 and was told that if any further surgery or treatment was necessary I would have to see a specialist in a major centre did I make the decision to come to the Yukon.

I'll never forget the day I came off the bus - July 11th 1973. As I was standing in amongst the people in the bus, I looked out on the crowd waiting at the depot and as the doors opened I remembered the song of Peggy Lee's going through my mind: "Is that all there is....". Believe me, that's how I felt. I also remember for many, many months wondering how Glen would adjust to having men in his life -- not that I should have worried, because he walked up to Dick, out of the crowd before I actually spotted him myself, shook hands with him and said, "Hi - I'm Glen. You're Dick aren't you?".

My first impression of the farm was very, very negative. No red painted barns, no silos, and a house with no paint, to say nothing of the fact that there were no curtains! There were and are a couple of junkyards but only in my ignorance did I label them as such. I am aware now that the Pelly River Ranch could not function without these "junkyards", they hold mass treasures of steel, wire, wood, old machinery and so on from which each and every repair unless absolutely necessary; anyway, it looks odd to see some new part on equipment which looks ready to fall apart.

Okay, "What do I do?". Let me see, what do I do? This year up to date, I have canned 505 jars of various food products - primarily salmon we have taken out of the river: secondly, probably produce out of the garden such as beets, beans, peas and carrots. I was lucky enough the last two years to get fruit in case lots and I canned it. Also we pick things like cranberries and blackcurrants and make jams and preserves. I perform the normal household duties. Play hostess - that's quite a thing; play hostess to our company. Last year we had 1,138 people visit. Many, many times I had





two tables set up and was feeding 12, 14, 16, as many as 18 people on different occasions - I guess it would even be safe to say on numerous occasions. This summer, I changed my style a little bit; there weren't as many tourists - there were very few American tourists this year, probably because of the gas shortage. We don't really know the reason. The highway was also flooded out for a while. I felt a little reluctant to have so many people come indoors for meals - primarily because it was, indeed, changing our lifestyle. We were having very little privacy. I enjoy company to a degree - to the same degree, probably, as any one of you would enjoy company; but when you see people every day and when you look over your records of last year and see that in the summer, from May to September, that you only had 17 days off when you didn't have visitors (and also you didn't know you had these 17 days off until you went to bed), it's an eye-opener. You have to re-evaluate what it is you want in life. So I spent last winter really doing that seriously, and I realized that we want people, we need people, but only a certain number, say 500. I think I've learned to trust my body and head to clue me in: when I'm feeling irritable and fatigued, when I resent seeing yet another strange vehicle pull into the yard, then I know it's time to change the pace. Our friends know they are always welcome. Last year, when we had over 1,100 people, I felt divided into multiple pieces, trying to make the people feel at ease, answering their questions, interrupting my often hectic schedule to show them around.. I also ended up feeling guilty in not giving my whole attention to friends and Yukoners. It took two very close friends to make me realize how impossible it was to do this well and, as I refuse to do a half-assed job in any undertaking, it was absolutely necessary to take a good hard look at the situation as a whole. Thank you Peter Steele and Al Chisla. 1979 has been a very good year.

Some of the activities which have kept me busy over the years have been changing the complexion of the big house from a bachelor pad to a regular type house - using lots of soap and elbow grease, as well as many, many coats of paint and wallpaper. All the furnishings which had been literally held together with coat-hangers, baling wire and binder twine have been officially retired. The





outside of the house is still not painted but I have decided that I don't really mind - but I sure as hell do have curtains now! I wager daily battle on keeping all the grass and water mixture picked up by feet going through the cow corrals and chicken yards outside the doors. Of course, animals aren't too discreet as to where and when they do go, so it's not unusual to step into a surprise!

As a centennial project in 1967, the men built a 32-mile bush road from Pelly Crossing on our side of the river. Prior to this, they drove in 26 miles from Minto and then freighted everything across the Pelly. No mean trick when you don't have a motor. Dick tells of often lining the boat, loaded with six tons of freight, up a good mile or so and spending most of the time in the river beating back ice blocks so they didn't smash into the boat and, of course, yourself. To this day, we only buy groceries once a year, usually in November, and it's difficult enough even now. I don't know if I could have coped with the river crossing. But then again, I'm not long on patience like Dick and Hugh are. How many of you have ever handled a ton of cow salt, block by block? The road is beautiful\* long and winding, with dips and dives as you go up and down hills. For 31 miles, you travel through heavy bush until you come to a gate. As you open this gate, our valley spreads out before you. On the right we are ringed with high, mountain-type hills of 1,500 feet. Fields of stooked grain march down for about half a mile, hemming the road. On the left is a open stand of brush and the mighty Pelly. The foot of our flat is contained by a 500-foot basalt wall - yes, it's very enchanting. I've never come through that gate, regardless of the time or season, without being moved. Perhaps it's because I know every foot of land: I know where all the various birds have their nests, the favourite places to chew one's cud if one is a cow, the too many gopher holes where these cheeky devils sit and really give you lip! On moonlight nights I've seen wolf packs wander through the fields. Foxes and owls are contenders for any meal this area may yield. I've also seen moose strutting across the open spaces before heading for the bush. On the hillsides, especially in





in spring and fall, I've watched bears- grizzlies, blacks and browns - grazing, often fairly close to the cattle. Many ducks of different varieties call our slough home.

On a more realistic level, I have seen the men come home literally beat, with aching backs and dried sweat on their clothes. I wonder how many million roots and stones they have picked off those fields, how many stooks of grain they have stocked to dry out. Many times the tractors and other equipment have given up and died on the spot, working their mechanical guts out. The men not only must have the strength and determination to see each and every job through to its end but must also coddle their wheeled help-mates and repair their ills while often disregarding their own.

These memories fade as I can also recall the vivid smiles of accomplishments the men have brought me whenever they have successfully completed whatever the season calls for. To watch Dick when he sees the rows of grain sprouting after hours of working the land and sowing the seeds is to see a truly happy man. When the last load of oat bundles come in before the snow flies, Dick is on a natural high for ages. I'll bet Hugh has keyed out every plant that grows in our area.

On a bench overlooking the farm, there is an archaeology dig which was done by the National Museum in Ottawa in 1963, government sponsored. This book is now done, by Robert S. Peabody Foundation in 1964. The book is called "Investigations in Southwest Yukon" and covers the whole bit up to 1964. The National Museum in Ottawa should have the complete up-to-date information available now; it should be less expensive to get hold of.

The Glenbow Foundation in Calgary has some of the artifacts collected here and there is also a display of Yukon artifacts in the McBride Museum. They may even be able to translate from archaeology to English for you. The man who did the dig on the Pelly River Ranch was Richard S. MacNeish - better known as Scotty - who was head of the Archaeology Department at the University of Calgary. He had a paper "Speculated Civilization Sequences in the North Country", he had a theory that cultures here represent a migration back from Arizona to Siberia; the original migrations that peopled North America were very





much earlier. Then, for some reason, some went back -- 5000B.C. in artifacts which are found here correspond to similar artifacts which are dated 3000B.C. in Siberia or as 8000B.C. in New Mexico. Personally, I don't really understand the technical data but I do know what it is like to hold an old artifact, let's say a scraper, in my hand and to let my mind drift into suppositions of what our ancestors may have been like and what they must have endured. Believe me, their tools were very simple; yet, with the odds they must have been up against, I don't feel their life was very easy. It is my understanding that this dig is slated for future investigation when more funds can be gathered.

There is also another very interesting and informative book out on the market; it deals with geological surveys in the Yukon and was compiled and annotated by Dr. Hugh Bostock, called "Memoirs 284". Dr. Bostock used the farm as a base camp and to winter the survey horses during the '30's and '40's. This man and I have been corresponding for well over a year and he visited the farm in August of 1978. He is extremely supportive of my endeavours to collect the history of this area, and writes me reams of valuable and interesting information. I have been so very fortunate.

The farm is situated 6 miles from the junction of the Yukon and Pelly Rivers. Almost everyone knows where Fort Selkirk is. Well, we're only a spit an' a holler up the valley! We have 337 titled acres, of which over 200 are under cultivation. Because of the number of livestock, we also have grazing leases, so it's not unusual to meet cows lying on our road chewing their cud. They have no fear of you, and you should have no fear of them. Each and every cow, calf and steer has a name. If they are slow to move, it is probably because they just as soon would have you scratch them. You can also hear horse bells echoing through the bush. Many river travellers cannot believe their eyes when they see cattle and horses miles from the home-place. The cows are put out on range in mid-May and come home in September when the pasture has frosted off. We leave salt blocks in various places for them and usually check on them quite regularly - especially during hunting season for fear that, in the



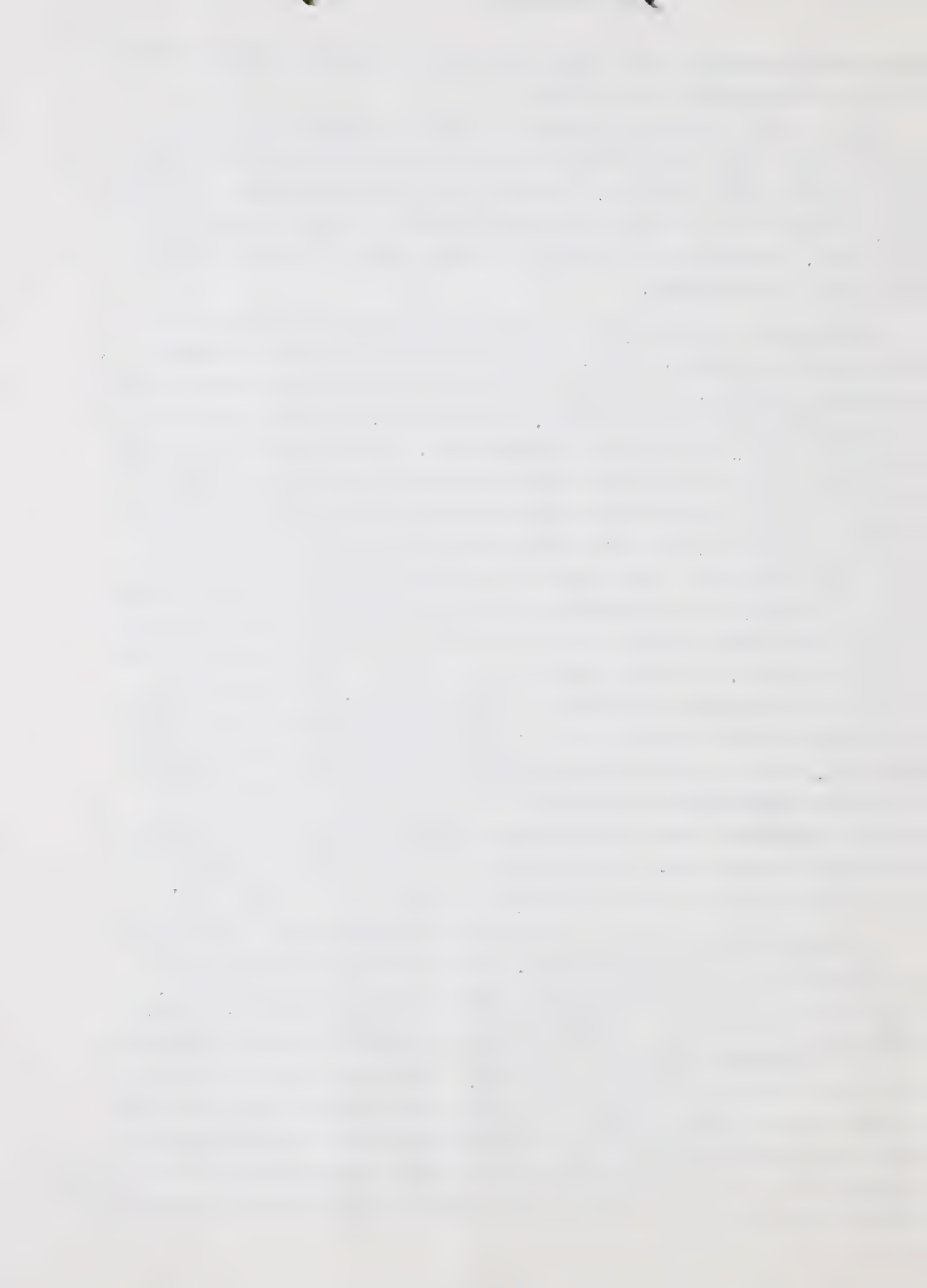


excitement of seeing a large animal moving in the bush, one may forget that moose do not have white faces!

Many of the calves are born out on range, although we try and wish the bull would co-operate, to have our cows calving in March or April before moving them out. I don't know if the bull can't find all 50 or so cows when they do need him or whether he just gets plain flaked out. Performance on demand is often hard on the male species - unless they are a rabbit.

We keep our milking stock at home with a couple of calves and other cows for company. Also, it provides an opportunity for folks, especially children, to actually see calves play and kick and of course get their meals from their mother. In our herd, we have a couple of grand old girls - Cinnamon and Other Mother. These two will nurse the milk cow's calves or any calf which has been deserted by its natural mother; in fact, Cinnamon will literally steal other calves. Every herd has a boss cow, and it's interesting to see her accept any challenge from contenders. It doesn't take long for the competition to get the message. Each cow knows her stall in the barn but occasionally Cinnamon will make a quick tour through all the mangers, if there are potatoes in them. She will even go to the root cellar and get her own if anyone is careless enough not to lock the door. In winter, the milk cows and any late-born calves, plus the bull, have a stanchion in the barn. The bull gets the most attention because we cannot afford to have his accoutrements frost-bitten! Some younger calves winter in the hen-house, which serves a dual purpose in keeping both them and the chickens warm. The balance of our herd stays in corrals and have drive sheds of a sort in which they go when it's very cold.

We are convinced that no breed but the Hereford can come through a Yukon winter in such good shape. People have questioned why we don't raise the Scottish Highland breed, which have so much hair. Our answer is twofold: Herefords are not so highly-strung; also, when the highland cattle lie down their body heat melts the surrounding snow and then their hair freezes down. When they attempt to get up often, they get bald patches where their hair doesn't come with them. Over the 25-year period, we have raised hundreds of cattle and only 2 have lost a portion of their tails - their fly-swatters - but neither (Fuzzy and Crocus) have had any ill-effects and, in fact, they both threw





their fifth calf this spring.

Rather than putting up hay, which the men did initially when they had only horse-drawn equipment, we now put down silage. In a big pit, all the hay, broome grass, weeds and anything that's green and grows is cut with a forage harvester and load upon load is put into this pit and tramped thoroughly. We must have at least 178 loads - each load representing about a ton - to see us through a winter. The food is loved by cows and horses alike. It has a marvellous aroma, much like a brewer's, and is steamy-warm when it is fed in the winter. During the winter months, vitamin A is given every Sunday. Grain, primarily oats, is fed to the milk stock and other animals which show need of it. When the horses come in for water they usually get a handout of oats as well. The livestock get oat bundles in-between loads of silage. The cattle are watered twice a day; the men cut a hole in the ice, often up to 47" of ice are cut, and this is kept open. It's not the most pleasant task when it is 60 below to stand on the river to see that everyone drinks and that no-one falls in. I can only remember Kelly losing her calf Irish to the Pelly. Mind you, the men have rescued many from a would-be water burial.

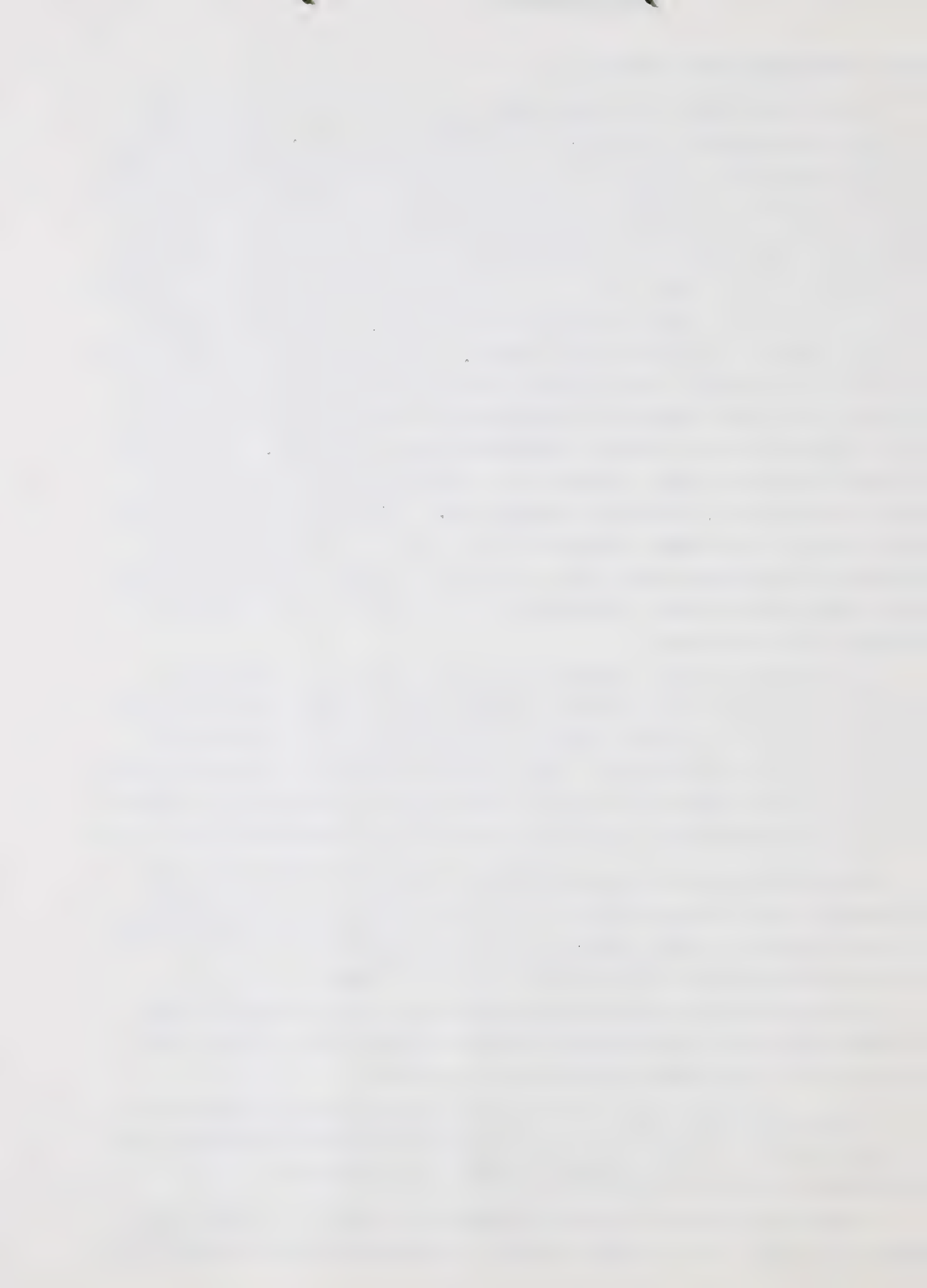
Our chickens forage mainly during the summer but still get a ration of oats that the men have ground, plus troughs of surplus milk. Naturally, they are housed during the winter and their rations and oyster shells are increased. They are our main demand for hydro during the winter. No lights = no eggs. Years ago, the men used gas lanterns but they aren't entirely practical and also are a potential fire hazard.

My breeding rabbits are kept in the root cellar with our vegetables and the machinery the men are overhauling. In severe weather a barrel heater is kept going. I feed a few pellets but mostly ground oats and oat bundles - the rabbits love the straw.

Our tom cat lives in the barn on mice and milk and spends most of his time on the bull's back. To get the fresh air, he rides out on the bull's back while he drinks at the river.

Our useless but well-loved dogs stay in the house on their rugs and would have a steady diet of people-food but usually trimmings from butchering and fish heads which I cook up with oatmeal.

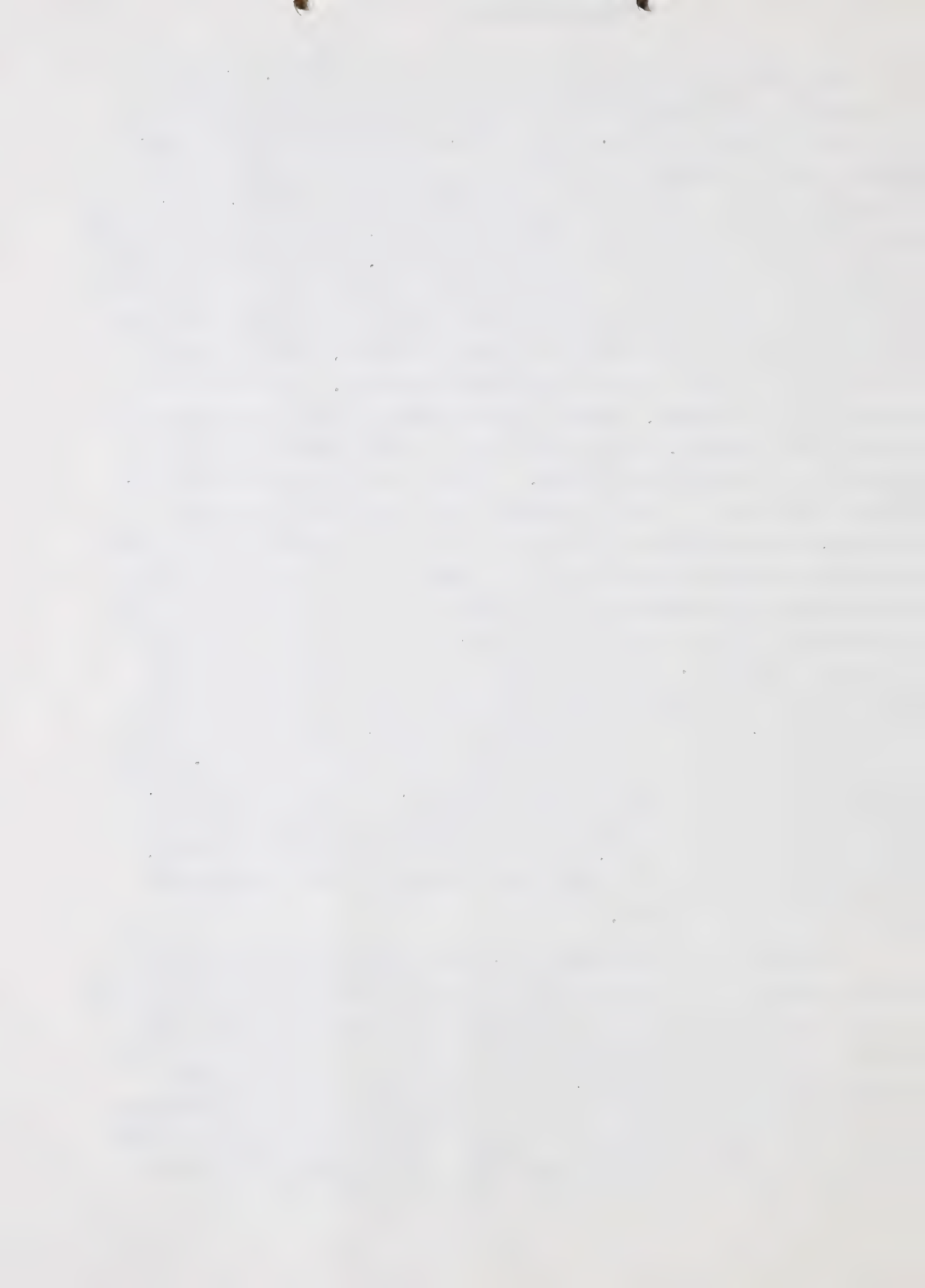
Talk-Too, my cat, lives on my shoulders or my white bedspread. What can I say? She is kinda spoiled but she's a delightful character!





What all do we grow? Let's start with the gardens. I have two large ones - one being known as the table or summer garden and the other as the winter garden. For a time, I experimented with transplants such as cabbage and broccoli as an example; we found that transplants had a tendency to become windwilt very easily, probably because the root system was not as sturdy, and only began yielding a day or three before those planted from seeds. At one point, we were irrigating from the river. We divided one garden into two portions - the section which was irrigated did not seem to do as well as the one which depended on the natural but scarce rainfall. The cold water seemed to be a shock and set things back somewhat. So now we let nature take its course. Unless the cut worms get us, our gardens are always a big success. Three years ago we made a thousand dollars profit on our surplus vegetables. The cut worms are another matter. These enemies do the greatest damage just as the seeds are germinating. Their method of ruin is to cut off the plants at root level. They are primarily active for 2 or 3 weeks and when they are mature they appear very innocent. In adulthood they are a moth. To control this insect with any degree of success, one needs to use chemicals, which are expensive. Another method is not to weed the garden, in the hopes that the insects will take their fill on the weeds. Pigweed or lambs-quarter is a favourite of theirs. A second method is to plant extra seeds - some for the cut worms and some for us. Since we don't believe in chemicals particularly, nor in extra expense, we opt for the weeds and extra seeds route. The unfortunate aspect of these creatures is that, after they are done with their damage, it is often too late to replant slow growing or long season plants and expect them to mature.

My summer garden contains peas, beans, beets, lettuce, onions, garlic, carrots, kola rabi, swiss chard, endives, herbs and sunflowers. In the winter one, there are parsnips, potatoes, cauliflower, broccoli, most mustard plants, extra beets and carrots. Also we have rhubarb, strawberries and raspberries. In the fields we grow mainly oats, the type being Rodney and Harman. In the past we have tried Victory, but this does not give as good a yield; Albeit does not give as good a quality of feed as Rodney. For wheat, we grow Park. The Garnet





variety was quite successful but we cannot get the seed now as it is an old variety and not popularly grown these days.

In our field we grew antelope rye which is used as late fall and early spring pasture, or a cut of hay can be taken off, or it can be ripened for seed. This year our stands of rye was 6 - 7 feet high. I got lost in the perimeter of one field - what a feeling, when you are surrounded and cannot look out to get your bearings. I wasn't tramp any down or Dick would have my neck, so I just shook the grain and called until Glen found me. I thought I was going to be given hell for shaking all the grain out but I didn't; maybe Dick was glad to see me since it was supper time!

For many years experimental plots of wheat, oats and barley have been grown for the former experimental farm at 1019 on the Alaska Highway and now for the Experimental Farm at Beaverlodge in Alberta.

We have tried clovers but a fungus type disease known as mycelium attacks the root system at frost level as the frost leaves the ground in the spring. This cuts off the roots at about 4". As you all realise, this can be a rather unhealthy and unhappy situation for any given plant. We did try bees for one summer but unfortunately we lost the queen. Since our main interest was not bees, we didn't feel that it was feasible or even worth the effort of further experimenting.

All my men - Dick, Hugh and Glen - are behind me 110% in my endeavours to write. I often believe that they are more convinced of my ability to pull this thing off than I am. I have had nightmares - not so much as failing per se but of letting people down who are of the same opinion. It's not difficult for me to talk on a one-to-one basis but I haven't talked in front of a group since I was 18 - which is 18 years ago. My sole purpose for doing this is because I believe at the gut level that there is a story to be told; and if I don't do it, it may eventually be put off until the accurate and historical aspect is totally lost. There are others far more capable than I am - for example, Hugh Bradley, who could probably do it more justice. Have any of you heard Hugh's stories? He is absolutely fascinating and has a unique slow, drawling way of teasing a person toward the punch-line. Me - I have the tendency to jump the gun. Hugh has convinced me he would never, never, never write - and here I thought





was something for him to do in his spare time or when he retired.  
So much for that thought!

As I mentioned earlier, I've never done a half-assed job on anything I have undertaken to do, but somehow I can't help wondering if indeed I haven't bitten off more than I can chew this time. There is no way to know for sure at this point but you can be sure that I am going to give it the best I've got.

People seem keenly aware of our lifestyle and our endeavours and I personally feel the time is ripe as this obvious interest is definitely an indication that a total history of the farm and immediate area is needed.

Thank you.

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